

Drafted by HScoville

24 January 1963

Brief Summary of Development of Satellite Recon Program

1. In the early 50's the AF initiated studies under the 117-L program for the development of a satellite recon system. This program which later became the SAMOS program was aimed at direct readout and prior to its cancellation involved the expenditures of hundreds of millions of dollars. The program used the ATLAS as a basic booster. The program was relatively open from a security point of view and provided very poor resolution. Only 1 partially successful flight ever occurred, and that was in 1960 after the first successful CORONA and resolution was greater than 100 feet.

2. When it became apparent that the 117-L program was not likely to be productive of useful intelligence, Drs. Land, Killian and Mr. Bissell went to work to develop plans for a simpler system using the basic THOR booster. This activity involved the presentation on 15 April of the CORONA program to the President. Para 5 of this program (attached) outlines the administrative procedures which were agreed upon at that time. Essentially the project involved a joint activity between CIA AND ARPA with CIA providing the Proj Dir (Mr. B.). The AF Ballistic Missile Div acted as the agent for ARPA. When ARPA dropped out of the space activities, their function of providing supervision over the development of the vehicle was taken over directly by the AF. The first successful CORONA flt occurred in Aug 1960. The program has become increasingly reliable since that time. In the spring of 1962, a higher resolution stereo system was incorporated in the CORONA program.

3. In the summer and fall of 1960, a special panel under Dr. Killian surveyed the entire aerial recon program and made recommendations for future efforts and established a streamlined organization for handling these programs within the AF. Basic to this study was preparation of satellite recon recommendations by USIB which for the first time laid down some ground rules on desirable resolutions.

4. In the spring of 1962 a status report on the recon ~~sy~~ program was prepared for the White House and the Intel Board. [redacted] It was, therefore, decided to proceed with the interim LANYARD program which used E-5 hardware in the CORONA system and hopefully would provide resolutions intermediate between CORONA/MURAL [redacted] The first flight of LANYARD is scheduled for February 1963.